episcopal church

The Diocese of Pennsylvania

CHURCH HOUSE

Suite 1600, 1700 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

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August 1, 1974

A PASTORAL LETTER
THE BISHOP OF PENNSYLVANIA

Addressed to the people of this jurisdiction which is to be read by the Clergy to their Congregations, as provided by Title III, Canon 18, Sec. 3.

I write these words in the presence of the Living Christ who I know loves, redeems, and forgives me and who loves, redeems, and forgives all of you who read or hear these words. I write these words believing and knowing that God has called and still calls me to be a faithful and obedient bishop in His Church, expressing through my thoughts, words, and actions His love, redemption, and forgiveness -- His ministry of reconciliation. I write these words assured that the God, who is the author of all grace, mercy, and truth, will be my judge and the judge of all our thoughts, words and actions.

The events of last Monday, July 29th, at the Church of the Advocate, Philadelphia, are of deep concern to me and to thousands of people here in the Diocese of Pennsylvania and throughout the world. For some it was a proclamation of the Gospel, an act of obedience to the Spirit, a way to speak to an issue long ignored by the Church; for many others it was a deliberate and knowing violation of the Constitution and Canons of the Church, which would further deepen the divisions among us, rupture constitutional authority, and undermine the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church which we have

vowed to maintain.

I must assure you that I, along with the Standing Committee and the Chancellor of our diocese, am committed to uphold and sustain the Constitution and Canons of the Church, as we are determined to maintain constitutional and canonical order in the Church; we are working through this concern prayerfully, endeavoring to be obedient and responsible. We have moved ahead in accordance with these ecclesiastical ordinances where, in our judgment, we do have appropriate authority, leaving some matters for other parts of the Church as the Constitution and Canons provide. The Presiding Bishop has also shown his deep concern by calling a special meeting of the House of Bishops in Chicago, August 14-15.

I want to state forthright what I have done, in full consultation with and the support of the Standing Committee and the Chancellor:

1. The Right Reverend Robert L. DeWitt, on July 29th by having participated in the service at the Church of the Advocate, was in violation of the Constitution and Canons of the Church. Accordingly, I have obtained assurance from him that he will not exercise his Holy Orders as bishop, priest, and deacon in this jurisdiction at least until the next meeting of the House of Bishops.

2. The Reverend Suzanne R. Hiatt took steps toward her ordination to the priesthood without the necessary canonical consent of the Standing Committee and the bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, her diocese. Accordingly,

I have assurance from her that she will refrain from exercising priestly duties until her status has been clarified.

3. I have admonished the Reverend Paul M. Washington of the Church of the Advocate for violating Article VIII of the Constitution -- the Declaration of Conformity to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Episcopal Church.

I, along with the Standing Committee and the Chancellor, am determined to move ahead faithfully, responsibly, and obediently in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the national church and this diocese. We are deeply sensitive to and conscious of the pain, the anguish, and the torment that we all bear at this moment. I can appreciate the frustration and despair of some of God's people who, having experienced the love and power of Christ's resurrection, feel oppressed by some of the Church's policies and positions which for them deny Christ's Gospel of love, justice, and freedom for all people and the ordination of women to Christ's priesthood of reconciliation. I know the hurt and pain we bear when the Church, the Body of Christ -- the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic fellowship -- is scarred by dissension and strife, broken vows and trusts, and violations of its own ordinances. I know, too, how strenuously I am tempted to, and do, fall short of manifesting the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit if I speak and act in bitterness, anger, and vindictiveness.

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A Pastoral Letter
The Bishop of Pennsylvania

Yet, I believe and live in the faith that God has set before me a glorious opportunity to serve and obey Him, who is my only hope and source of love; I pray that by His grace He will make me His faithful servant. I hope that you too will see this as a moment of judgment when God is calling us all to a renewal in His Spirit and a rededication to His ministry of love and reconciliation.

You are constantly in my prayers, as I know I am in yours.

Faithfully, in the love of Christ,

Lyman C. Ogilby

Bishop of Pennsylvania